

Retention and expectations

**By CMSgt Tony Palladino, HQ CTANG
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I was having a discussion with an airman the other day who said to me "Chief, you know I've been a member of the Guard for some time. I love my job, the organization and the opportunity to serve my country, but there's a couple of things that are bothering me". "Only a couple", I said. He smiled and responded "Chief, I'm coming up to the end of my enlistment term and I have to make a decision whether to stay or leave, what do you think I should do?"

My immediate intent of course, was to tell him all of the positive reasons why he should stay and continue to be a productive member of the organization, but I didn't. Instead, I thought for a moment and asked him "Why are you having difficulty with this decision, it sounds to me like you enjoy being here?"

He said, "I can't remember the last time any of my supervisors asked me why I joined the Air National Guard, what motivates to me stay, or told me how much of a loss it would be if I left." Now, before we go on I need to tell you this story is completely fictional. It didn't really happen, but could it?

While recruiters do an excellent job of bringing new people in, it is actually our organizational culture that retains them. Certainly retention is everyone's job, but more importantly it is commanders, chiefs, first sergeants, senior NCO's and others in leadership and supervisory positions who need to know what influences and motivates individuals to remain members of the Guard for a full and rewarding career.

Expectations fall into four primary groups: Economic, Social, Psychological and Spiritual.

Economic expectations are those involving pay, incentives, benefits and promotions. Economic expectations often bring people into the Guard, but they are not often high on the list of expectations to keep people in the organization. Fortunately, retention decisions are not often based on money

unless there is a disruption of what is expected by delays in pay or bonuses, or other promises not being met.

Social expectations are often characterized by a sense of belonging. Members with social expectations will be motivated and influenced by sponsorship programs, mentor programs, good supervisory relationships, family and after hour activities. As these relationships develop, members become friends, and peer pressure often influences a member's retention decision.

Psychological expectations are those where the member is getting something from the Guard experience that cannot be gotten somewhere else. Members with psychological expectations will be motivated and influenced by learning new things, supervising others, skill training, meaningful hands-on experience and use of time, professional military education, recognition and personal growth oriented activities. This is often the area where supervisors and leaders influence the member to leave the Guard by not attending to the growth expectations of their members.

Spiritual expectations are characterized by service above self or patriotism. Members with spiritual expectations are motivated and influenced by service, patriotism, community support, family activities, state emergency response, deployments and other personal contribution activities. When members are given the opportunity to experience the feeling of making meaningful and worthwhile contributions, they will remain faithful and productive members of the Guard.

The bottom line is if we pay close attention to meeting member's expectations we'll be able to sustain our people in the coming years, continue to achieve mission readiness and minimize our losses.

Then perhaps this fictional story won't become a reality.

Submitted by Chief Rowland

Real 'code talker' at local library

On Oct. 10, 2002 at 2 and 7 pm, at the main branch of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library, Mr. Wilfred Billey will speak on his experiences as a Navajo Code Talker. Billey enlisted in the Marines in 1943 and became a member of the all Navajo 297th Platoon. As a radioman he was with the Second Marine Division during the battles of Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. After he was honorably discharged in 1946, Billey spent 40 years as a teacher, high school counselor and high school principal. Currently he is a farmer and rancher, active member of the Navajo Code Talkers Assn., Marine Corps League and the American Legion.

Former 179th chaplain gets star

Chaplain, Col. Virgil Lattimore, formerly of the 179th AW and HQ Ohio Air National Guard, was recently announced to become the Air National Guard Assistant to the Chief of Chaplain Service, HQ U.S.A.F. in Washington, D.C.

Lattimore will assist the chief of Chaplain Service in maintaining a seamless, total force chaplaincy. He will help oversee more than 550 chaplains and support personnel. Lattimore will pin on the rank of brigadier general once he is confirmed by Congress.

9-11 Remembered

Members of the 179th Chorus and Color Guard will participate in the Let Freedom Reign - A Celebration of the American Spirit program on Sept. 11, 2002 at the Renaissance Theatre in downtown Mansfield.

The program is a community event to pay tribute to the victims of last year's terrorist attacks. Tickets are available at the box office and proceeds benefit the United Way of Richland County.